

OPEN AND SHUT?

Thursday, July 25, 2013

Dominique Babini on the state of Open Access: Where are we, what still needs to be done?

This is the ninth Q&A in a series exploring the current state of Open Access (OA). On this occasion the questions are answered by Dominique Babini, Open Access Advocacy leader at the Latin American Council on Social Sciences (CLACSO). Based in Argentina, CLACSO is an academic network of 345 social science institutions, mainly in the universities of 21 of the region's countries.



Dominique Babini

In inviting people to take part in this Q&A series I have been conscious that much of the discussion about Open Access still tends to be dominated by those based in the developed world; or at least developing world voices are often drowned out by the excitable babble of agreement, disagreement, and frequent stalemate, that characterises the Open Access debate.

It has therefore never been entirely clear to me how stakeholders in the developing world view OA, and whether their views differ greatly from those that have dominated the OA conversation since it began in around 1994. In the hope of gaining a better understanding I plan to invite a number of people based in the developing world to take part in this series.

To start the ball rolling I am today publishing a Q&A with Dominique Babini, who is based at the University of Buenos Aires. Readers will judge for themselves how, and to what extent, Babini's views differ from those we hear so often from those based in, say, North America or Europe.

Personally, I was struck by two things. First, unlike everyone else so far in this series, Babini does not directly mention either the Finch Report or the controversial OA policy introduced earlier this year by Research Councils UK (RCUK).

Second, Babini is quite clear that commercial publishers should no longer be allowed to set the agenda for scholarly communication. Indeed, she sees little useful role for them in a world where research is now routinely shared and distributed online.

This latter point confirms a suspicion I have had for a while. That is, as the world increasingly moves to OA two opposing views of how scholarly communication should be organised appear to be emerging. One view says that the only way scholarly publishing can be efficient and effective is if market forces control the process. Of necessity, this implies that commercial publishers should continue to play a major role in the process of distributing research.

A second view says that since commercial publishers have shown themselves to be excessively greedy and controlling, it is no longer appropriate for them to be involved in the process of managing and sharing publicly funded research, particularly now that the online environment makes it possible for the research community to take back ownership of scholarly communication.

This second view appears not to be confined to the developing world. The impact of commercial publishers on scholarly publishing has been aired twice in this series already. In the first Q&A, for instance, palaeontologist Mike Taylor said, "I'm so frustrated by the compromises that researchers, librarians and even funders make to the legacy publishers. Those publishers are not our partners, they're our exploiters. We don't need to negotiate with them; we don't even need to fight them. We just need to walk away."

And in the sixth Q&A, Portuguese librarian Eloy Rodrigues remarked "while I am convinced that OA is the future, I'm not completely sure whether it will be a 'research-driven OA', or a 'publishing-driven OA'. Both scenarios are still

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possible, and the way in which we will transition and implement OA will make a world of difference.”

Specifically, Rodrigues suggested that the extent to which scholarly publishing proves to be cost effective in the future will depend on which form of OA emerges.

Alternative model

Of course, any suggestion that the role of commercial publishers in scholarly publishing should be curtailed, or ended, invites an obvious response: What alternative model is there? As publishers (and *apparently librarians*) believe that there is no alternative, this is an important question.

Could it be, however, that the developing world has an answer? In her Q&A Babini draws our attention to a number of online indexing services in Latin America and Africa that have over time developed into novel OA platforms – notably Brazil-based *SciELO*, Mexico-based *Redalyc* and South Africa-based *AJOL*.

Babini points out that none of these are commercial services but local non-profit community-organised projects. And while initially they were created simply to index the content of local journals in order to raise their visibility, over time they have evolved into full text OA services and, for those journals that want it, some can even provide complete OA publishing platforms. (For instance, a number of the journals on *AJOL* – which is based on the open source software *Open Journal Systems (OJS)* developed by the Public Knowledge Project (*PKP*) – do not have their own web platforms, but manage the entire publication process on *AJOL*, including peer review.

Between them *SciELO* and *Redalyc* now index nearly 2,000 Latin American peer-reviewed journals, all of which are available in full-text and all of which are available on an OA basis. And *AJOL* offers access to 460 African journals, although only 150 of these are currently OA (45% of the individual articles indexed by *AJOL* are OA).

Most of the journals indexed by the three services do have their own web sites, but the services offer a unified platform to allow users to search across all the journals in one go. However, this is no longer the most significant point about these OA portals. What is noteworthy is that, with the exception of those journals in *AJOL* that still levy subscriptions, all the content is freely accessible to anyone, and (most notably) none of the OA journals indexed by the portals levies article-processing charges (APCs).

In other words, in this environment Gold OA does not imply “pay to publish/free to read”, but “free to publish/free to read”. So when OA advocates in Latin America say that they support Gold OA they do not have in mind the kind of model envisaged by Finch/RCUK (where researchers are able to access third-party content for free, but need funds to pay to publish their own research), but the model exemplified by *SciELO* and *Redalyc* (where research can be both accessed and published without charge).

In addition, research institutions in Latin America are busy setting up Green OA institutional repositories. These are viewed not as publishing platforms but the locus for researchers to self-archive papers they have published elsewhere (either in subscription or OA journals), as well as their theses, books, and research reports. That is why Babini talks below of both Green and Gold open access platforms.

Given the apparent success and popularity of non-profit OA platforms like *SciELO*, *Redalyc* and *AJOL*, and the growing disillusionment with the OA roadmap envisaged by Finch/RCUK, we might wonder whether the new model emerging in the developing world offers a better option for the developed world too.

Two different directions

Either way, right now OA publishing appears to be pointing in two different directions. One direction envisages a world in which scholarly communication continues to be moulded and driven by commercial interests (as envisaged by Finch/RCUK), the other points to a world in which scholarly communication is moulded and driven by the research community itself, and on a non-profit basis.

It may of course be that the Global North will end up adopting the Finch/RCUK model while the Global South adopts the *SciELO/Redalyc* model – and these different models might turn out to suit those respective parts of the world well enough. We might also see the development of mixed models; and additional new models could emerge too. Whatever the future holds, however, we should note that it is public money that is used to fund the process of scholarly communication. It therefore surely behoves the research community to spend that money responsibly, wisely and cost effectively.

The problem right now, as Babini points out, is that the research community seems to be sleep-walking into the future rather than planning it. What is needed, she suggests, is a global discussion on how best to build the future of scholarly communication.

Alternatives, explained why he believes the var...



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Babu Gedela

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Robin Osborne
on the state of
Open Access:
Where are we,
what still needs
to be done?

One of a series exploring the current state of Open Access

Instead, what we too often see today is an OA movement at war with itself, or simply so focused on small details that it cannot see the big picture. And for their part, governments appear over keen to, as Peter Suber puts it in the eight Q&A in this series, “put the business interests of publishers ahead of the access interests of researchers.”

Meanwhile, legacy publishers are now working overtime to create OA in their own (profitable) image.

“Now that OA is here to stay we really need to sit down and think carefully about what kind of international system we want to create for communicating research, and what kind of evaluation systems we need, and we need to establish how we are going to share the costs of building these systems,” says Babini.

For her part, Babini believes that scholarly output should be treated as a commons, and so managed as a “shared social-ecological system”. Her thinking on this has been heavily influenced by the ideas of [Elinor Ostrom](#) and [Charlotte Hess](#), ideas they expounded in their book *Understanding Knowledge as a Commons*.

And that, it seems, is the kind of picture that starts to emerge if one asks an OA advocate based in Latin America to comment on the current state of OA. But please do read the Q&A below to get the complete picture.

Earlier contributors to this series include palaeontologist [Mike Taylor](#), cognitive scientist [Stevan Harnad](#), former librarian [Fred Friend](#), SPARC director [Heather Joseph](#), publishing consultant [Joseph Esposito](#), Portuguese librarian [Eloy Rodrigues](#), Executive Officer of the Australian Open Access Support Group [Danny Kingsley](#), and de facto leader of the Open Access movement [Peter Suber](#).

The Q&A begins

Q: When and why did you become an OA advocate?

A: I became an OA advocate 15 years ago, when I started co-ordinating [CLACSO's](#) Latin America and Caribbean social science information network and the inter-regional development information network [IDIN](#). These two services were developed in order to provide web access to bibliographic databases, and so enable the exchange of research results within the region and with other regions.

When we started in 1998, the circulation of publications in CLACSO's network was necessarily in print format. But since the cost of postage was prohibitively high, and inter-library lending is nearly non-existent in Latin America we could only aspire to a very limited circulation. For me this was a cause of deep frustration and a sense of injustice. We could provide people with online access to bibliographic details, but we could not provide access to the all-important full-text associated with those bibliographic details. It was clear to me that these limitations could only really be overcome if we provided the full text online as well – which for me implied Open Access.

So we began building a web list of titles with links to the full-texts from CLACSO's network research results. Then in 2002 we developed a [digital repository](#), and we began to fill it with full-text articles, books and working documents. Today the repository contains some 30,000 full-text documents, including a peer-reviewed journal collection and 1,000 academic books. On average the services attract 850,000 downloads a month.

But it has taken time, and it has required the joint effort of both library and editorial teams. What we did was develop a working methodology, and then promoted the model among librarians and editors in member institutes in the region, emphasising the benefits of OA. We did this by means of fortnightly messages that included reviews of international and regional trends in OA, and OA initiatives and methodologies.

These activities contributed to the fact that today 67% of the 396 journals published in CLACSO's network (mainly by universities) are OA, and CLACSO's [editorial catalogue](#) of academic books provides abstracts and links to all the full-text documents hosted in the [digital repository](#). And the repository provides metadata and access statistics for every book and journal included. The library-editorial methodology we developed has inspired several universities in the region.

Q: What would you say have been the biggest achievements of the OA movement to date, and what have been the biggest disappointments?

A: I should preface my comments by saying that the context in the Global South is different to that in the North, and my own views on OA are naturally influenced by our experience in Latin America. So while I follow and respect the international discussions about OA that are taking place, I ask readers to understand that the views I express here are a product of our local reality.

That said, my perception is that in the “North” the biggest achievement has been to pave the way for new generations to dream about and create open science environments based on open access scholarly communications. My biggest disappointment with the development of OA in the “North” is that it has

(OA), the Q&A below is with Robin Osborne , Professor of Ancient History a...



The OA Interviews:
Frances Pinter
In 2012 serial entrepreneur Frances Pinter

founded a new company called Knowledge Unlatched (KU). The goal, she explained in 2013, was ...

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Eloy Rodrigues on the state of Open Access: Where ...

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Where are we, what still needs to be done? Stevan ...

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created a “gold rush” environment in which the APC business model is held to be the way forward. Yet [DOAJ](#) shows that 70% of journals do not charge APCs. And the Northern approach has been arrived at without any awareness of the possible consequences for developing regions. Yet the promise was that OA would create a world in which researchers in these regions would be able to become more active contributors to the international research endeavour and the efforts to address issues that impact global sustainability.

By contrast, the biggest achievements in the developing regions in my view are the OA peer-reviewed journal portals created at university, national and regional level, especially the regional Latin American portals [SciELO](#) and [Redalyc](#) and the portal African Journals Online ([AJOL](#)) in Africa. These portals contribute to improving the quality of research publications in these regions, and they provide them with international visibility and access.

In addition, in Latin America we have seen national OA legislation being debated in Congress in [Brazil](#) (since 2007), in [Argentina](#) (where legislation was approved by Deputies in 2012, and is now being discussed in the Senate), in [México](#) (2013), and recently such legislation has been approved in [Peru](#) (2013). In all cases, these bills will require that the results of government-funded research are made available in OA digital repositories.

My biggest disappointment in the “Global South” is that we continue to evaluate our research output, and our researchers, by using indicators based on journal collections that so poorly reflect the research results of developing regions ([Cetto-Alonso Gamboa-Córdoba Gonzalez](#) 2010, [Guédon](#) 2007).

Q: *There has in the North always been a great deal of discussion (and disagreement) about the roles that Green and Gold OA should play. In the context of Latin America and the developing world, what would you say should be the respective roles of Green and Gold OA today?*

A: I will start by saying that I do not believe scholarly communication should be subject to commercial interests. Like research itself, it should be funded by governments and it should be done on a non-profit basis. So in my view all roads that contribute to non-commercial OA are good for the developing regions, and Green and Gold are complementary and often overlap (my assumption here, by the way, is that Gold OA does not require researchers to pay APCs).

As I explained in the 2011 analysis I did for the [UNESCO-GOAP Global Open Access Portal \(OA Latin America and the Caribbean region and country analysis\)](#) there is in our region, as is the case in other developing regions, a strong tradition of cooperative information systems, a tradition started by the UN information systems (e.g. in agricultural, health, and environmental research). Today these systems are providing access to more and more full-text as a complement to the bibliographic information.

And these subject digital repositories, based on co-operation among national focal points, reflect the same philosophy that lies behind the first open access peer-reviewed journal portal created in the developing regions back in 1997 – [SciELO](#).

[SciELO](#), which has its roots in the Latin America and the Caribbean health digital repository, and currently hosts 1,033 APC-free journals in all disciplines, reflects the local tradition of creating national focal points and sharing the costs of indexing journals. Likewise, [Redalyc](#) – which was developed in [México](#) – hosts 815 journals from Iberoamerica. With both initiatives there are no costs for the users of the content, and no costs for the authors – this is the logical and natural approach in a region where the main publishers of scientific and academic journals are public universities, and the services attract millions of abstract views and full-text downloads each month.

Meanwhile in Africa, as I mentioned, [AJOL](#) provides a similar service. [AJOL](#) was developed in South-Africa in 1998 with support from the international development charity [INASP](#). Currently [AJOL](#) hosts 460 African journals, many of which are OA. The point to note is that all these outstanding examples are based on a cooperative non-commercial Open Access model.

More recently, the Green Open Access movement has begun to make inroads in Latin America too. As with Gold OA, in the developing regions Green OA developed out of the UN subject digital repositories I mentioned. But we are now seeing institutional repositories start to bear their [first fruits](#) in the region. In addition, we have recently seen the emergence of a regional cooperation agreement, with nine countries in Latin America coming together to create [La Referencia](#). This in turn has begun to co-operate with the Confederation of Open Access Repositories ([COAR](#)) – with the aim of building a global knowledge infrastructure of networking Open Access repositories.

So far as OA mandates are concerned we have only weak ones in the region today. But thanks to OA advocate [Stevan Harnad](#) and his example of what makes a good mandate, we have the [Liège model](#) to push for.

I especially value the way the [Liège mandate states](#), “*only those references introduced in ORBi will be taken into consideration as the official list of publications accompanying any curriculum vitae for all evaluation procedures ‘in house’ (designations, promotions, grant applications, etc.)*”

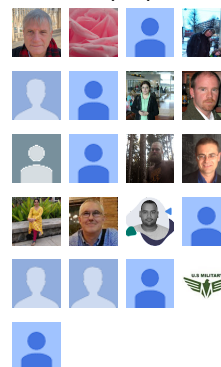
Q: *What about Hybrid OA? Do you see any role for that?*

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A: I worry about this alternative approach. It is based on the needs of commerce, not researchers, and makes very little sense in the context of developing regions – where the average research salary and the average research budget simply cannot afford APC rates that are fixed at international levels.

I realise that many OA publishers offer fee waivers for researchers in developing regions. But can the waiver system really provide a long term solution? I prefer co-operative movements. So when it comes to creating a system for complying with the US Office of Science & Technology Policy (OSTP) [Public Access Memorandum](#), for instance, I much prefer the [SHARE](#) approach to the [CHORUS](#) approach.

Q: How would you characterise the current state of OA in Latin America, in the Caribbean, and internationally?

A: In Latin America and the Caribbean – a region where research is mainly government-funded (either through local government funds, or through international co-operation funds from foreign tax-payers) – OA is widely accepted. Journals use the APC-free Gold open access publishing model to a much greater extent than in other regions ([Aperin, Fischman, Willinsky 2011](#)), and the main research universities all have a growing collection of their research output available in Green and Gold open access repositories ([Babini, 2012](#)). I should note that unlike in the North, both Gold and Green OA are non-APC repository and publishing alternatives for research and academic institutions from our region. Sometimes they complement each other, and sometimes they overlap.

So as I noted earlier, research universities have in recent years begun to build institutional repositories (see for instance the Directory of Open Access Repositories, [DOAR](#)). At the same time they have been creating their own peer-reviewed OA journal publishing platforms using the Open Journal Systems ([OJS-PKP](#)) software. This is being used both for national and regional collections of peer-reviewed journals (e.g. in [Brazil](#), [Argentina](#), [Bangladesh](#), and [AJOL](#) in Africa).

Some good examples of APC-free OA journals in Latin America can be seen at the National Autonomous University of Mexico-[UNAM](#), which publishes 111 of its journals using the OJS platform, the University of Sao Paulo-[USP](#) (104 journals), and the University of Chile-[UCHILE](#) (104 journals). Please note that these numbers refer only to those journals that use the OJS platform, the above universities publish many more journals as well.

We could also note that, for the first time, the [PKP International Publishing Conference](#) will take place in Latin America on August 19-21, at the National Autonomous University of México-UNAM.

So far as the current state of OA in the North is concerned, colleagues based there are better placed to judge. However, from my perspective there seems to be a growing confrontation over how the costs of OA are to be met. At one extreme, we can see a gold rush as publishers seek to replicate the present [high profit levels](#) they are used to and which Gold OA also seems to promise, with both legacy publishers and new entrepreneurs jostling for a piece of the market.

At the other extreme, we can see a bottom-up OA infrastructure being created, with initiatives slowly taking shape from within the academic and research community, in a desperate attempt to use OA as a means to regain control of scholarly communication, building institutional repositories, supporting mandates and legislation. Here the work being undertaken by [SPARC](#), [COAR](#), [EIFL](#), [UNESCO](#) and other OA advocacy organisations, and by activists in the developed and developing regions, is all contributing to the advancement of OA.

Q: What still needs to be done, and by whom?

A: Funding is key. The need to improve and reward the quality of scientific output in the developing regions presents a great challenge. We also need to ensure that funding is available for the work being done by organisations like [INASP](#), [EIFL](#), [UNESCO](#), [SPARC](#), [COAR](#), [IDRC](#), [EPT](#). Likewise, funding will be needed for publishing platforms like [SciELO](#), [Redalyc](#), and [AJOL](#), for journal management and publishing systems like [OJS-PKP](#) (which, by the way, is now used by more than 15,000 journals worldwide, 35% of which are based in Latin America and the Caribbean), and for journal directories like [DOAJ](#) and [Latindex](#).

We also need to complement traditional evaluation indicators based on international journals (e.g. the [Impact Factor](#)) – which so poorly reflect the research being done in developing regions – with additional indicators like those being developed by OA peer-reviewed journal portals such as [AJOL](#), [SciELO](#) and [Redalyc](#), and with [alternative metrics](#). [PKP](#), [SciELO](#), [Redalyc](#), [AJOL](#), [Latindex](#), [FLASCO](#) and [CLASCO](#) are currently working together, with support from [IDRC](#), [UNESCO](#) and [INASP](#), to improve web access to indicators from the OA portals, and to undertake analysis of those OA indicators to complement the traditional indicators from [ISI](#) and [SCOPUS](#).

The key question is: how are we going to organise the peer-review process to ensure quality in both the Green and Gold OA platforms for publishing that takes place in universities (remembering that it is universities that pay the salaries of both the authors and the evaluators). [Eve Gray \(2012\)](#) from South Africa, for

instance, argues that universities need to explore alternative quality evaluation methods.

The good news is that research on OA scholarly communication in the developing regions has recently begun, thanks to support from international organisations (e.g. IDRC in Latin America, IDRC in Southern Africa, and INASP and UNESCO), and with participation from local universities. But this will really need to increase if we want to train new generations of OA bibliometric researchers.

Q: What in your view is the single most important task that the OA movement should focus on today?

A: In the international context – where legacy publishers argue that the research community should leave it to them, and where OA entrepreneurs insist they can provide OA at a lower costs, and with better results – we owe ourselves a global discussion about the future of scholarly communication. Now that OA is here to stay we really need to sit down and think carefully about what kind of international system we want to create for communicating research, and what kind of evaluation systems we need, and we need to establish how we are going to share the costs of building these systems.

It is understandable that current global transition proposals are heavily based around continuing co-operation with publishers, or around competing with those publishers, but what we should be doing is imaging the future we want and preparing for it.

Personally, I would like to see OA-based scholarly output managed as a commons (Ostrom-Hess 2006; Chan-Kirsop-Arunachalam 2011; Chan-Costa 2005). So I would really like to see a discussion about the value of creating a shared ecosystem based on the kind of model we have been developing for journals in Latin America, along with the various initiatives for creating networks of repositories (e.g. SHARE in the US, DRIVER in Europe, and La Referencia in Latin America).

I think the global OA forums and review sites (e.g. GRC, GOAL, BOAI, SPARC, OAD, GOAP) could make a very considerable contribution to the challenge we face in thinking through how best to share resources and costs for a global OA scholarly communication system.

Q: What does OA have to offer the developing world?

A: On the one hand, it provides access to worldwide research results to everyone with internet access, not just to those universities and organisations who can afford to pay.

On the other hand, it holds out the promise of providing international visibility and access to the research outputs of those in the developing regions. Shared national, regional, and international OA ecosystems – where authors' salaries, article evaluators' salaries, and the infrastructure investments needed to create open and shared not-for-profit scholarly communication systems – can greatly contribute to improving the presence and quality of the research output of the developing regions in the global conversation.

This is a future that has been envisioned by a number of colleagues who have written about OA from a developing region perspective (e.g. Guéron 2007; Chan-Costa 2005; Gray 2012; Chan-Kirsop-Arunachalam 2005). Essentially, we have to take advantage of the potential of OA to overcome the divide between the mainstream and the peripheral in science.

Q: What are your expectations for OA in 2013?

A: I see clouds on the optimistic OA horizon.... OA proposals from publishers, and publishers' lobbyists, are growing apace. Meanwhile, the research community, research funders, and those responsible for evaluating researchers have yet to give serious thought to how to build the future of scholarly communication. They still largely depend on the publishing industry to provide access to journals, and use indices provided by the same publishing industry in order to reward researchers.

Q: Do you expect OA to prove any less expensive than subscription publishing? If so, why/how? Does cost matter anyway?

A: Maybe I can best express my opinion on this by quoting my recommendation for the draft of the final report of UNESCO's OA Latin America and the Caribbean Consultation (Kingston, March 2013)

“Both Gold and Green routes are suitable forms of OA for the region.

a. For Green routes, inclusive and cooperative OA solutions should be promoted to avoid new enclosures on knowledge access and dissemination.

b. Regarding the Gold route, and considering that - i) only 30% of OA journals in the world presently require article processing charges (APCs); ii) APCs are mainly fixed by international publishers and entrepreneurs, and fixed at international prices which are unaffordable for the average developing country; iii) research in Latin America and the Caribbean is mainly government funded; and iv) the region has a decade of experience with OA regional gold initiatives (SciELO and Redalyc) with more than 1,000 journals with no APCs – it is therefore

recommended that the Gold OA route in the region continues its present emphasis on sharing costs"

Dominique Babini is Open Access Advocacy leader at the Latin American Council on Social Sciences (CLACSO), an academic network of 345 social science institutions, mainly in the universities of 21 countries of the region. Her main professional focus is on building information networking communities to support the sharing and dissemination of research in Latin America and the Caribbean, an initiative made possible thanks to support from SIDA (Sweden), Norad (Norway), UNESCO, INASP (GB), and IDRC (Canada).

She is also a member of the experts committee of the National System of Digital Repositories in Argentina, and contributed to the draft OA legislation that was approved last year by the Argentinian House of Representatives. The legislation is currently under discussion in the Senate and, if passed, would require the development of interoperable digital repositories (individual or co-operative) for all government-funded research results, with papers having to be deposited no later than 6 months after publication.

Last March Babini was invited by UNESCO to introduce the context of OA at UNESCO's OA Latin America and the Caribbean Consultation, held in Kingston, Jamaica. She also helped draft the final report, which included recommendations for future action.

Babini is the co-author and editor of a Spanish-language OA book (2006) about electronic publishing and digital libraries, a book that has an introduction by the de facto leader of the OA movement Peter Suber — his first text in Spanish!

Babini can be reached at: dasbabini@gmail.com; Skype: dominique.babini; Twitter: dominiquebabini

Posted by Richard Poynder at 15:36



6 comments:



Mike Taylor said...

Thank you Dominique, for this excellent and informative perspective. I must say I have a lot more sympathy for your vision of an OA future than for the hybrid-driven vision that the Finch committee members seem to have had in mind (perhaps because it genuinely didn't occur to them that there was a viable alternative).

It's well known that, when the operating costs of arXiv are divided by the number of deposits, it comes out to cost about \$7 per manuscript that it makes freely available (though that does not provide peer-review infrastructure). Is it possible to provide similar figures, however vague, for published papers on SciELO, Redalyc and AJOL? It would be very interesting to see what funding bodies get for their money in these setups, compared with the costs of APCs with legacy publishers.

July 26, 2013 7:58 am



Pablo de Castro said...

Thanks to Richard Poynder for such a great initiative.

While sharing many of the arguments expressed by different interviewees, I am slightly disappointed that interviews, keynotes and interventions are generally so keen and unanimous in highlighting the advantages of OA (especially the conceptual ones, since the technical ones hardly ever get mentioned) while completely failing to address at the same time some of the key issues about OA beyond the at this point dreary Gold vs Green debate - which does otherwise very well fit strong ideologically-charged discussions that last for ages and lead nowhere (it reminds me very much of the institutional vs subject repository discussion a few years ago).

Such as the fact that many researchers simply loathe final manuscripts and won't take less than a final publisher version. Or the fact that after ten years the repository community has not yet been able to agree on a single repository directory that will serve the movement. Everything is gradually being taken care of (incidentally with little involvement from the most vocal OA advocates) and the challenges the OA repository movement is taking are ever more complex - with altmetrics and author identification being two of the main current ones that will incidentally require some level of public-private cooperation, probably with the publishers as well.

The two issues I point at -namely severe disconnection from researchers and the lack of a collective governance- have been respectively addressed to some extent by Danny Kingsley and Dominique Babini, but I think a more solid discussion needs to be held in this regard, leaving aside just for a while the Gold vs Green controversy if possible. The figures provided by Dominique on SciELO, Redalyc and AJOL are great, and there is a general agreement in the international repository community that Latin America is nowadays the most dynamic world region in terms of OA infrastructure development, but I don't think the argument that "70% of journals do not charge APCs" is too solid when applied to the 'Global North' - we would instead need to get into a lengthy discussion of what the actual rate looks like for *relevant* journals.

July 26, 2013 11:12 am 🗑



Dominique Babini said...

Thank you Mike for your comments, and for this information about arXiv. You are right, we need similar figures for our region. I will encourage this survey.

July 26, 2013 11:13 am 🗑



Mike Taylor said...

Pablo de Castro says: "Many researchers simply loathe the final manuscripts and won't take less than a final publisher version."

I think that's true, and that it's an important truth.

But I also can't help thinking it's nothing more than habit. I think if you were to ask what it is that publishers actually *do* between final-manuscript stage and final-publisher version, they'd be hard-pressed to make a case that it yields a qualitative difference.

I admit I share this prejudice to some extent myself. And yet I have been happily citing the Solomon/Bjork paper on APCs from *its preprint* for ages. When I discovered (only today, coincidentally) that it's since been "published" in a journal, I just shrugged. There's no point in linking to *the "published" version*, after all, it's paywalled. And I can't imagine Wiley did anything important to it.

So I suspect that our habit of expecting final-publisher versions is no more rational than the habit most of us had until relatively recently, of expecting read science to be printed on paper.

July 26, 2013 11:34 am 🗑

Fred Friend said...

Another very valuable insight into the future of OA. I would like to see more contributions from colleagues in South America and Africa to the debates on the future of scholarly communication, not only on Richard's blog but also on the email discussion lists. We share many issues in common and where there are differences it is good to know about them. We all live on the same planet.

July 26, 2013 2:49 pm 🗑



Richard Poynder said...

Pablo de Castro: "*I am slightly disappointed that interviews, keynotes and interventions are generally so keen and unanimous in highlighting the advantages of OA (especially the conceptual ones, since the technical ones hardly ever get mentioned) while completely failing to address at the same time some of the key issues about OA beyond the at this point dreary Gold vs Green debate.*"

I too think that many OA advocates oversell the benefits of OA. In fact, I can envisage a number of scenarios in which the research community (or certainly sections of it) discovered that it was considerably worse off in an OA environment.

That is why the specifics of how OA is implemented are so important; that is why the distinction between Green and Gold is so important; and that is why Dominique is right to call for a *global* debate.

That said, I am not sure I would agree that all those taking part in this Q&A series are over optimistic.

July 26, 2013 6:49 pm 

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